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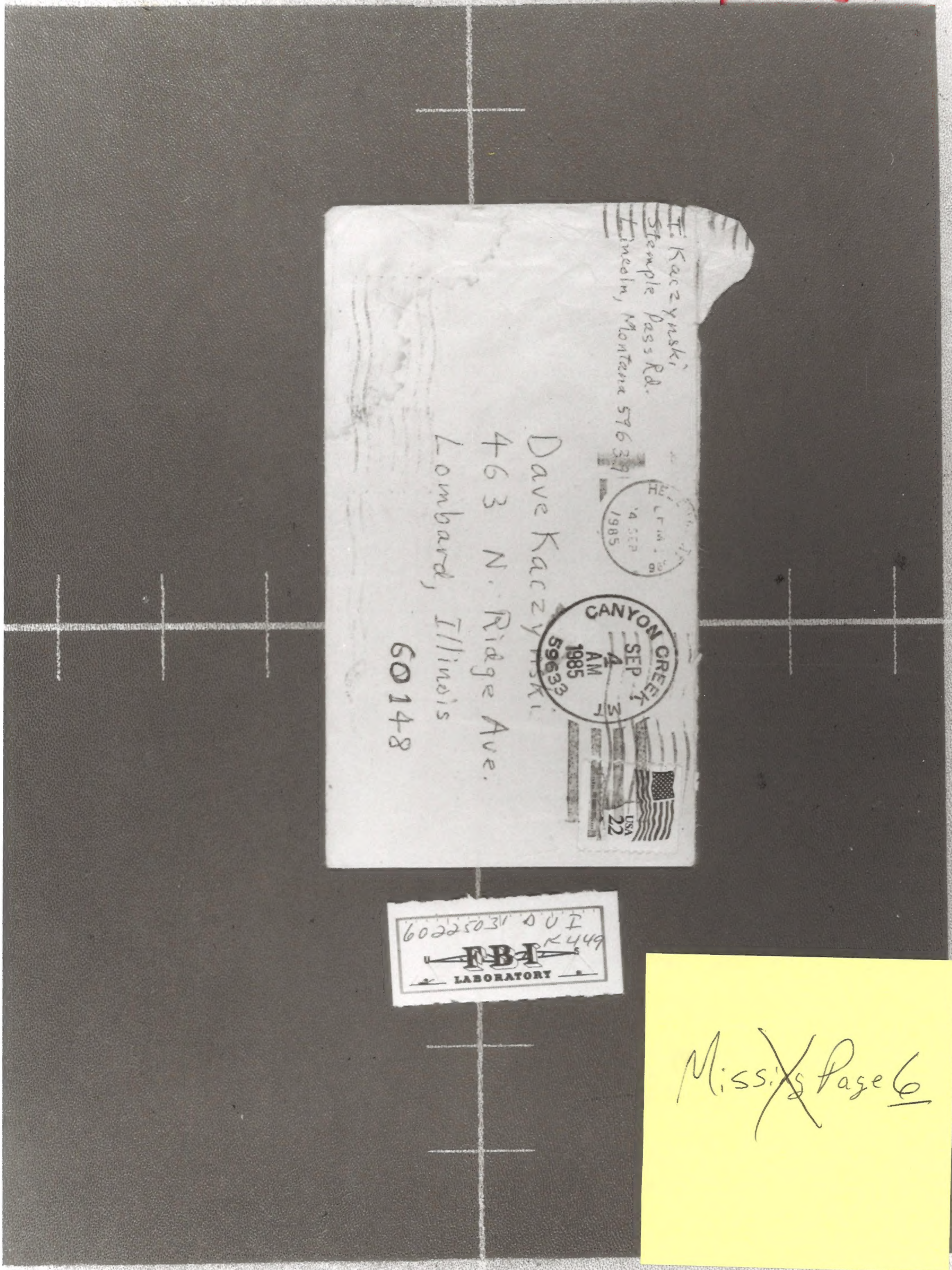

Missing Page 6

Distinguido Doctor:
Me alegro de saber que haya resuelto usted el problema de Bieberbach, ya que me ahorra el trabajo de publicar mi propia prueba de la conjetura.

Me compadezco de usted por su "destierro" (por decirlo así) que lo ha sufrido usted a causa de uno o dos errores menores que los cometió de joven. Su sufrimiento lo comprendo muy bien, ya que a mí también me ha acontecido lo mismo. Bien me acuerdo del comienzo de todas mis dificultades. Era yo niño de escuela; el maestro nos daba nuestra primera lección de multiplicación. Acababa de explicarnos el procedimiento para multiplicar dos números.

"Ahora bien — prosiguió — decidme, niños, ¿cuánto son 24 X 37?"

"¡888!" — respondí en seguida.

"Muy bueno, Hércules — dijo el maestro — eres agudo. He aquí un problema más difícil: ¿cuánto son 132 X 436?"

"¡57552!" — lancé.

"Todavía mejor" — respondió. Y con una sonrisa suficiente, continuó — "He aquí un más difícil todavía. ¿Cuánto son 9678 X 42695?"

"413202210" — contesté sin demora.

El maestro se frunció las cejas, trabajó unos segundos con el lápiz, y carraspeó. Dijo sin sonreir:

"Pues, ¿cuánto son 596315 X 476894?"

"284379045610" — respondí inmediatamente.

Trabajó con el lápiz uno o dos minutos, al cabo

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de los cuales se comprimió los labios, me fijó una mirada sombría, y me dijo: "Y ¿ cuánto son 698325946774159X31326894173?"

"21876383032854109724075507"

—contesté en seguida.

Trabajó furiosamente con el lápiz durante unos quince minutos y miró el resultado, rechinando los dientes. Luego me dijo gruñendo y con cara amenazante:

"Ahora bien, impudente. ¿Qué es la raíz cuadrada de dos? Si eres tan agudo, ¡dímelo! ¿Eh? ¡Dímelo!"

"Aproximadamente —respondí— es 1.414241."

El maestro sacó un libro, lo hojeó frenéticamente, halló lo que buscaba, y exclamó triunfante:

"¡Bah! ¡Estúpido! ¡Es 1.414214! Pongo a tu nombre —continuó, abriendo su libreta— una nota malísima."

Desde entonces me viene persiguiendo siempre este errorcito. Me ha estropeado la carrera.

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Dear Dave:

Pardon me for correcting you, but I notice you write Boquilles whereas the map you sent me spells it Boquillas. I assume the map is right.

Speaking of corrections, I found at least one and probably two errors in that clipping you sent me of an item that had been translated into Spanish by the firm of Myrna Salazar and Associates. The definite error is this: with the noun "gente" (people) they used the plural form "hacían" of the verb "hacer". They should have used the singular form "hacía" — and I can quote chapter and verse for this. I believe that they also committed an error — a too-literal translation — when they wrote "estar en buena salud" for "to be in good health". In Spanish the usual way of saying "to be in good health" is "estar bien de salud", though with a different shade of meaning they might also say "tener buena salud". I cannot, however, be entirely certain that "estar en buena salud" is not also used in Spanish. Still, I'm fairly confident that someone — either not a native Spanish speaker, or a native Spanish speaker who's been in the U.S. long enough to have his Spanish corrupted by his English — just translated the English expression directly into Spanish, producing an un-Spanish phrase. Incidentally, in that book of Spanish-American folk-tales that you gave me, in the Spanish version produced by a Mexican-American who probably spoke English as well as Spanish from early childhood, I recall that I encountered a few anglicisms. But if I remember correctly, some or most of these anglicisms were listed in my dictionary, with the notation "anglicism". Thus I suppose these expressions can be considered more or less legitimate today; but the frequency of anglicisms in the

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Jerry's writing suggests that his Spanish — and perhaps that of the whole Mexican-American community — is heavily influenced by English. Incidentally, I've read in one place that Spanish today is in fact being modified by the influence of English and French, and in another place that modern German also is being influenced, apparently rather heavily, too, by English. I imagine the same must be true of many other modern languages too, given the economic and technological predominance of the English-speaking countries.

Anyway, I wrote a letter to the firm of Myrna Salazar in which I expressed my horror at their translation, describing it as an insult to the Castillian language. I offered to correct their translations for them hereafter at a moderate price. I told them that in any case it was necessary for them to leave off their reprehensible habits and begin to write correct Castillian. If they did not do so, I threatened to denounce them to the Spanish Academy. (The Spanish Academy is a venerable and highly conservative institution which claims to dictate what constitutes correct Spanish.) I didn't send the letter because I didn't have the address. Maybe some time when I get to Helena I'll look up the address and send the letter.

I appreciate very much your having taken the trouble to send me the clipping and to look up those translation companies in the yellow pages, but I don't think it does me much good. What I'd need to know is <u>how they get customers</u>. Obviously one way is through the yellow pages, but I can't get listed there cause I don't have a phone. If you ever see any ads for translations anywhere, please let me know, 'cause I could try advertising in the same place. I used to

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see such ads in the old Saturday Review.

As to Giardia — 2 or 3 years ago I read a newspaper article about contamination of the Missoula city water supply, and I think it was some city engineer or official who stated that Giardia is usually not killed by Chemical treatment. I wouldn't take a park ranger's word on this subject. The way to find out would be either to consult a doctor (but I wouldn't trust Langreder) or call the public heath department, either in Chicago or Texas. Maybe a university biology dept. might be able to help.

I don't remember exactly where I read about a 15% mortality rate from rattlesnake bites. It was in some book that I read years ago. I'm not absolutely certain that I am correctly remembering the 15% figure. A year or two ago I read in the paper about a guy who got bitten near Helena. The doctors gave the guy of a choice of having or not having the antivenin, because there was risk of a serious allergic reaction to it. I forget what the guy decided. They also cut a large disk of skin and fat off the guy's leg — presumably taking with it some of the venom. But even if the usual treatment consists only of pampering the victim in bed for a few days, that could be important — remember there's a big difference, when you're sick, between that and lying out alone in the desert subject to heat and cold, and possibly serious thirst as well, since, if you're far from a water source, you may run out

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of water since it might be a matter of days before you can travel.

I suppose the only way to find out, again, is to consult a doctor or the public health dept., preferably down in Texas where they'd know about such things. And don't forget to ask not only about the mortality rate, but also about the risk of having a limb permanently crippled by the bite.

As an alternative to fiberglass leg-guards you might consider wrapping your lower legs thickly in strips of heavy cloth. I read somewhere I think, that some of the southwest Indian tribes wrapped their lower legs thickly in cloth as snakebite protection. Probably less reliable but ~~more~~ comfortable than fiberglass.

OK, here's a Spanish passage. You probably don't read these things anyway, but what the hell.

Se dice que es verdad la anécdota siguiente, que exhibe el carácter inglés, o sea el carácter que tenían los ingleses hace cien años. En aquel entonces era la Arabia todavía un país exótico y salvaje. Un cierto inglés emprendió una expedición exploratoria a través de dicho país desde el oeste hacia el este; entretanto, otro inglés, partiendo de India, viajaba por Arabia del este hacia el oeste. Por casualidad se encontraron las dos caravanas en el medio del desierto. Los dos Ingleses se saludaron sólo levantando la mano. No cambiaron ni una palabra, y las dos caravanas pasaron adelante sin detenerse.

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Will it suit you OK if I arrive on January 25? If it's OK from your point of view, we'll make it definite for January 25th. As to the exact time of day, I'll let you know later; but I'll let you know at least 2 months before Jan. 25, i.e., by Nov. 25.

Also, would it be alright with you if I set 2 alternate dates in case of difficulties? That is, if I don't show up on Jan 25, can you also be there to pick me up on Jan. 26 and if I don't show up then, then on Feb. 1. also? The idea is that if I miss a connection somewhere I might get to Alpine a day late, and I'd have no way to get in touch with you or get to your place. Also, if there is a spell of bad weather here around Jan. 25, I might want to put off the trip by a few days so that I won't have to tote my pack to Lincoln when its 50° below or something.

I thought late January would be a good time for me to come because then there will be a couple of weeks before your hiking season starts in mid-February. That way if we don't take a hike such as you might wish to take, I won't be spoiling your hiking season for you, and on the other hand if we do decide to take some ambitious hike together I'd only have to wait a couple of weeks for mid-February. Also, late January seems convenient from my point of view.

You presumably read the papers a lot more often than me, since I read them only rarely. So maybe you can answer this question for me: Is it true that AIDS is spread almost exclusively through sexual contact or blood transfusions? And that there is practically no possibility of getting it through such things as coughing and sneezing and so forth? I read that

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some doctors are predicting a really terrible epidemic of AIDS — the article I read even went so far as to compare it to the Black Death. If this is really true, and if it's also true that you can only get it through sex or blood transfusions, then I think AIDS is the greatest thing that's happened since Attila the Hun. Can you think of anything better than to have the world's population reduced by a third* without any danger to ourselves? I'm a virgin myself, and I imagine you probably are too, so presumably we have nothing to worry about.

But let me know if I'm right (as far as you know) about the means of transmission of the disease.

Needless to say, my coming to see you is contingent on sufficient money and sufficient health. I trust that problems with either one of the two would qualify as a "serious reason" for backing out. But of course I'd hope to be able to let you know about ~~any~~ such problems long enough in advance so that you ~~won't~~ won't have to make an unnecessary trip to Alpine.

I'm enclosing a nutty letter that I started to write in Spanish and didn't finish. I was just writing it to pass the time anyway, so I just quit when the inspiration ran out. But you may find it amusing if you want to take the trouble to decipher it.

Sorry I took so long to answer your latest letters.

— Ted

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* The Black Death is said to have wiped out a third of the population of Europe.

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